

Message Text

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PAGE 01 CARACA 06185 01 OF 02 172234Z
ACTION ARA-14

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CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00
PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8108

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LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 1 OF 2 CARACAS 6185

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: OVIP (CARTER, ROSALYNN), VE, US

SUBJECT: MRS CARTER'S VISIT ROUND-UP

1. SUMMARY: THE SUCCESS OF MRS. CARTER'S VISIT WAS DETERMINED BY THE RESPONSIVENESS OF THE GOV TO CARTER ADMINISTRATION POLICY AND BY HER DEFT HANDLING OF SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES AND PUBLIC EVENTS. THE VENEZUELAN MEDIA REACTION WAS ENTHUSIASTIC. THE VENEZUELAN'S LOVED IT; THE GOV WAS VERY PLEASED. THERE WERE SOME INCIDENTS INVOLVING THE AMERICAN PRESS ACCOMPANYING MRS. CARTER BUT NOTHING MAJOR. AN INTERESTING ASPECT OF THE VISIT WAS THE CALL ON MRS. CARTER BY FORMER PRESIDENT ROMULO BETANCOURT. IN THEIR TWO FORMAL MEETINGS, PRESIDENT PEREZ REACTED MOST POSITIVELY TO MRS. CARTER'S EXPOSITION OF THE ADMINISTRATION'S FOREIGN POLICY. THEIR DISCUSSIONS ALSO SERVED TO COALESCE AND CATALYSE PRESIDENT PEREZ'S OWN THINKING ON HIS FORTHCOMING VISIT TO WASHINGTON AND OPENED UP INTERESTING SUGGESTIONS FOR COOPERATIVE ACTION BETWEEN THE TWO NATIONS. END SUMMARY.

2. THE GOV WAS PREDISPOSED TO VIEW THE VISIT OF MRS. ROSALYNN CARTER IN THE MOST FAVORABLE LIGHT POSSIBLE. PRESIDENT PEREZ HAS BEEN ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT PRESIDENT CARTER AND HIS POLICIES.

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PAGE 02 CARACA 06185 01 OF 02 172234Z

OUR STATEMENTS ON HUMAN RIGHTS, NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION, AND THE CONCEPT OF MORALITY IN FOREIGN POLICY HAVE STRUCK VERY RESPONSIVE CHORDS. THE VENEZUELAN'S WERE ALSO QUICK TO GRASP THE POSSIBILITIES OF MRS. CARTER AS A DIRECT AND INTIMATE CHANNEL TO THE PRESIDENT. THE FACT THAT PRESIDENT PEREZ'S VISIT TO WASHINGTON IS SCHEDULED FOR THE NEAR FUTURE WAS THE ONLY OTHER ELEMENT REQUIRED FOR AN ABSOLUTE GUARANTEE OF A WARM

WELCOME. THE FACT THAT MRS. CARTER WAS ALSO ABLE TO HANDLE HERSELF DEFTLY IN SUBSTANTIVE DISCUSSIONS WITH SOME VERY SOPHISTICATED POLITICAL PRACTICIONERS INDEED AT FIRST MILDLY SURPRISED AND THEN DELIGHTED HER HOSTS. HER SKILLFUL HANDLING OF PUBLIC EVENTS AND THE MEDIA WITH THE OPPORTUNITIES FOR A TACIT ASSOCIATION OF VENEZUELA WITH THE CARTERS WAS EAGERLY ACCEPTED BY THE GOV.

3. THE VENEZUELAN PRESS REACTION THROUGHOUT THE VISIT WAS MOST FAVORABLE AND ENTHUSIASTIC WITH MRS. CARTER FRONT PAGE NEWS IN ALL MAJOR DAILIES THOUGHOUT THE 3-DAY VISIT. THE GREATEST EMPHASIS OF REPORTING OF HER MEETING WITH PRESIDENT PEREZ WAS ON THE ANTI-OPEC CLAUSE IN THE U.S. TRADE LAW. THIS HAS BEEN A TOPICAL HOBBYHORSE ON THE PART OF THE PRESS FOR SOME TIME BECAUSE OF ITS IMPLICATIONS OF UNJUSTIFIED DISCRIMINATION. TYPICAL OF THIS COVERAGE WAS EL NACIONAL'S FRONT PAGE HEADLINE: "PRESIDENTS PEREZ AND CARTER WILL DISCUSS ANTI-OPEC CLAUSE: SITUATION OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST VENEZUELA IS CENTRAL THEM OF MEETING HELD BETWEEN U.S. FIRST LADY AND PRESIDENT PEREZ BEFORE HER DEPARTURE FOR THE U.S." THE FACT THAT THE VENEZUELAN PRESS WAS NOT BRIEFED MORE EXTENSIVELY ON THE REAL TENOR OF THE SUBSTANTIVE DISCUSSION WE TAKE AS AN ADDITIONAL INDICATION OF THE SERIOUSNESS WITH WHICH THESE WERE CONSIDERED BY THE GOV.

4. WHILE THINGS WENT SMOOTHLY FOR THE VENEZUELAN PRESS, THERE WERE SOME INCIDENTS INVOLVING THE AMERICAN PRESS ACCOMPANYING MRS. CARTER. AT A PRESS CONFERENCE CALLED SPECIFICALLY FOR THE AMERICAN PRESS BY PRESIDENT PEREZ AFTER HIS FIRST MEETING WITH MRS. LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 CARACA 06185 01 OF 02 172234Z

CARTER, THE AMERICAN REPORTERS ASKED ONLY THREE QUESTIONS. THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE DAILY JOURNAL RAN AN EDITORIAL CHASTISING THE GROUP SAYING: "THE APPARENT ABSENCE OF INTEREST (AMONG THE U.S. REPORTERS) WAS A SOURCE OF DISCOMFORT FOR THOSE HERE WHO ARE SEEKING TO INCREASE MUTUAL AWARENESS BETWEEN THE NORTH AMERICANS AND VENEZUELAN PEOPLE. THE U.S. REPORTERS SHOULD BE AWARE THAT THEY MISSED A GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY TO ELICIT INFORMATION FROM THE CHIEF OF STATE OF A SMALL NATION WHICH IS PLAYING AN EXTRAORDINARY ROLE IN WORLD EVENTS TODAY..."

5. IN ADDITION, THE AMERICAN PRESS SUFFERED ON THE ONE HAND FROM THE SOMETIMES HEAVY-HANDED VENEZUELAN SECURITYMEN WHO TEND TO SEE PRESS MEN AS A NUISANCE AND AN IMPEDIMENT TO THEIR OWN PROCEDURES AND ON THE OTHER FROM THEIR OWN EAGERNESS WHICH TENDED TO IGNORE VENEZUELAN SENSITIVITIES, CUSTOMS AND PROPER PROPRIETIES. VENEZUELAN OFFICIALS ALSO FAILED TO GRASP THE STATUS THE PRESS HAS ACHIEVED IN THE U.S. WE UNDERSTAND THAT SOME MEMBERS OF THE AMERICAN PRESS GROUP WERE ALSO NOT PLEASED WITH THE ADMITTEDLY LESS THAN FIRST-CLASS LODGING ACCOMMODATIONS AT THE

CIRCULO MILITAR. THE DAILY JOURNAL RAN A STORY HEADLINED:
"FOREIGN PRESS UNHAPPY ABOUT LOCAL HOSPITALITY."

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PAGE 01 CARACA 06185 02 OF 02 172225Z
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LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 2 OF 2 CARACAS 6185

6. IN THEIR TWO FORMAL MEETINGS (JUNE 10 AND 12),
MRS CARTER AND PRESIDENT PEREZ DISCUSSED US FOREIGN
POLICY INITIATIVES, PEREZ' REACTION TO THEM, AND POSSIBLE
AGENDA ISSUES FOR PEREZ STATE VISIT TO WASHINGTON
(JUNE 28-30). THE DISCUSSIONS WERE EXTREMELY FRIENDLY,
THE VENEZUELAN PRESIDENT REACTING MOST POSITIVELY TO MRS CATERS
EXPOSITION OF THE NEW ADMINISTRATION'S FOREIGN POLICY
AND MAKING IT CLEAR THAT HE WANTS TO COOPERATE WITH THE CARTER
ADMINISTRATION WHENEVER POSSIBLE AND SEEKS TO ASSOCIATE HIMSELF
AND HIS ADMINISTRATION WITH US INITIATIVES ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND
NONPROLIFERATION. PRESIDENT PEREZ WHOLEHEARTEDLY SUPPORTED THE US
STAND ON HUMAN RIGHTS, WHICH HE TERMED "A MAJOR TURNING
POINT IN HISTORY." HE SUGGESTED QUIET, MULTILATERAL
CONSULTATION TO DEVISE A JOINT ECONOMIC STRATEGY FOR
THE CARIBBEAN. HE ALSO URGED THAT THE US TAKE A STRONG
STAND ON AFRICA TO COUNTER COMMUNIST INFLUENCE. PEREZ
EMPHASIZED THAT LATIN AMERICA WANTS BOTH BILATERAL AND
MULTILATERAL RELATIONS WITH THE US INCLUDING A
STRENGTHENING OF THE OAS. HE ASSOCIATED VENEZUELA WITH
US POLICY INITIATIVES FOR RESOLVING THE PANAMA CANAL
ISSUE AND THE REESTABLISHMENT OF DIRECT CONTACT WITH
CUBA. HE ALSO EXPRESSED HIS CONCERN ABOUT BELIZE,
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PAGE 02 CARACA 06185 02 OF 02 172225Z

BOLIVIAN ACCESS TO THE SEA, AND CHILE-PERU TENSION, STATING HE PLANNED TO DISCUSS THESE ISSUES WITH PRESIDENT CARTER. PEREZ PRAISED THE US STAND ON NONPROLIFERATION, WHICH HE SAID HAD PUSHED ARGENTINA AND BRAZIL INTO ACCEPTING SAFEGUARDS. HE ALSO ANNOUNCED VENEZUELA WOULD IMMEDIATELY RATIFY THE AMERICAN CONVENTION ON HUMAN RIGHTS. NOTE: GOV RATIFIED ON JUNE 14). PEREZ SUGGESTED THAT THE JOINT DECLARATION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

TO BE SIGNED IN WASHINGTON DURING HIS VISIT INDICATE VENEZUELAN-US SUPPORT FOR THE COSTA RICAN INITIATIVE TO ESTABLISH A UN HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS. PEREZ CRITICIZED THE GSP EXCLUSION OF VENEZUELA IN THE TRADE ACT, DEFENDED OPEC, THE PETROLEUM PRICE ISSUE, AND THE NEED FOR EQUITABLE TERMS OF TRADE. HE REPEATED HIS STANDARD LINE THAT OPEC IS AN INSTRUMENT IN THE NORTH-SOUTH DIALOGUE AND EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT THERE WOULD BE PROGRESS IN THAT DIALOGUE.

7. AN INTERESTING ASPECT OF THE VISIT WAS THE CALL ON MRS CARTER BY FORMER PRESIDENT, ROMULO BETANCOURT, THE GRAND OLD MAN OF VENEZUELAN DEMOCRACY. THE MEETING WITH THE AMERICAN COMMUNITY WAS AN UNQUALIFIED SUCCESS AND A TOUCH OF COLOR WAS ADDED WHEN THE NORTH AMERICAN ASSOCIATION, THE SPONSOR OF THE EVENT, PRESENTED MRS CARTER WITH AN ORCHID GROWN BY A LOCAL FANCIER WHO IS REGISTERING THE HYBRID UNDER THE NAME, "ROSALYNN." AN ISSUE EVENT SCHEDULED WITH 300 UNION LEADERS HAD TO BE CANCELLED BUT FEELINGS WERE ASSUAGED BY A PERSONAL NOTE FROM MRS CARTER TO THE HEAD OF THE UNION, TURNING ANY POSSIBLE NEGATIVE REACTION INTO REGRET AT A MISSED OPPORTUNITY.

8. AN INTERESTING, ALTHOUGH PRESUMABLY UNINTENDED FACET, WAS THE FACT THAT SOURCES CLOSE TO THE VENEZUELAN FIRST LADY INFORMED US THAT MRS PEREZ HAD BRIEFED HERSELF FOR THE VISIT BY EXTENSIVE READINGS OF PRESIDENT CARTER'S AND SECRETARY VANCE'S LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 CARACA 06185 02 OF 02 172225Z

POLICY STATEMENTS. DR RUGHT LERNER DE ALMEA, PRESIDENT OF THE MASSIVE AYACUCHO SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM AND ONE OF THE HIGHEST RANKING WOMEN OFFICIALS IN THE GOV EXPRESSED SATISFACTION AT THE SUBSTANTIVE NATURE OF THE VISIT HEADED BY A WOMAN. SHE STATED HER BELIEF THAT THIS ESTABLISHED A PRECEDENT WHICH COULD ONLY BE BENEFICIAL TO VENEZUELA.

9. IN SUM, THERE IS NO QUESTION THAT THE VISIT WAS A SUCCESS. THE VENEZUELAN MEDIA WAS ENTHUSIASTIC. THE VENEZUELAN'S LOVED IT;

THE GOV WAS VERY PLEASED. IT SERVED TO COALESCE AND CATALYZE
PRESIDENT PEREZ'S OWN THINKING ON HIS FORTHCOMING VISIT TO
WASHINGTON AND CONTRIBUTED SIGNIFICANTLY TO THE PROPOSED AGENDA
FOR DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN THE TWO PRESIDENTS. IT OPENED UP INTERESTING
SUGGESTIONS FOR COOPERATIVE ACTION BETWEEN THE TWO NATIONS,
NOT ONLY FOR THE WASHINGTON VISIT BUT ALSO FOR THE NEAR AND
MEDIUM-TERM FUTURE. THIS WAS DUE TO A HAPPY JUXTAPOSITION OF
FACTORS WHICH LEAD THE VENEZUELANS TO BE RECEPTIVE TO OUR
OBJECTIVES. IT WAS CAPPED BY THE FACT THAT BECAUSE OF
MRS CARTER'S OWN PREPARATIONS AND PERSONAL QUALITIES IT
REALLY WAS A SUBSTANTIVE VISIT.
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